

Fact Sheet for Environmental Cooperative Agreement between Wisconsin Electric Power Company and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The agreement between Wisconsin Electric and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) signed on February 5, 2001 is the first of its kind in Wisconsin. It was developed under the authority of the Environmental Cooperation Pilot Program, which was created by the State Legislature in 1997 and is codified in s. 299.80, Wis. Stats.

Wisconsin Electric Makes Significant Commitments

By entering into this Agreement, **Wisconsin Electric is making a formal commitment at Pleasant Prairie Power Plant to go beyond the normal regulatory requirements. They are pledging to pursue *superior* environmental performance.** To begin with, the company has committed to developing an environmental management system that meets the requirements of ISO 14001 within one year. In addition, Wisconsin Electric will install a modern environmental management information system to add even greater assurance of continual compliance with all regulations. Furthermore, the company is committing to ongoing environmental research concerning mercury air emissions and continuous particulate matter emission monitors. Wisconsin Electric will also share its environmental expertise and expand the benefits of this program by conducting environmental audits of key suppliers. But the centerpiece of this Agreement is Wisconsin Electric's plan to recover coal ash from company-owned landfills and convert it from a waste product into a valuable commodity. The recovered ash will either be used to make an aggregate material for construction uses or be blended with coal and burned at the Pleasant Prairie Power Plant to generate electricity. This will lead to significant environmental benefits, as detailed below.

Key Benefits of Reusing Coal Ash

- Some of the ash to be recovered under the terms of this Agreement still contains significant amounts of energy; in fact, all the ash tested to date meets industry specifications for "coal." The ash therefore represents an underutilized energy resource. Any ash recovered and used to generate electricity will displace some of the coal currently used by the power plant, with no appreciable increase in air emissions. In fact, **the company hopes to reduce its use of coal by at least 10,000 tons per year and generate more than 10,000 MWh of electricity per year by burning coal ash that might otherwise remain forever in a landfill. This is enough electricity to meet the average annual needs of more than 1000 Wisconsin homes!** The Agreement will reduce the environmental impacts associated with coal mining and all of the secondary impacts caused by the cross-country transport of coal.
- Ash that is recovered and used to make aggregate will displace sand or gravel currently used to make the same products, with no reduction in the quality or safety of those final products. This will reduce the land use and environmental impacts of displaced sand and gravel operations.
- The recovery of ash as allowed by this Agreement will extend the useful capacity or life of Wisconsin Electric's operating landfills, minimize the possibility that any new landfills will need to be sited, and reduce the long-term risk of soil or groundwater contamination associated with landfills. Over the long term it could enable the company to completely eliminate one or more landfills and put that land to a more valuable use.

- Wisconsin Electric's plans for ash recovery and reuse were all approvable under standard Wisconsin rules, but normally would have required multiple case-by-case approvals for each specific landfill and each end use. Granting a blanket approval via this Agreement allows both Wisconsin Electric and the Department to realize substantial savings of time and labor. This means Wisconsin's environment will realize the benefits much more quickly and at lower cost to all sides than it would in the absence of a cooperative agreement.

Safeguarding Public Health and the Environment

This Agreement does not grant any variances to existing environmental standards, emission limits, or pollution control requirements, nor does it exempt Wisconsin Electric from any such requirements in the future. On the contrary, it includes measurable and verifiable goals for waste reduction, improved efficiency, and reduced use of natural resources. All pollution limits remain verifiable, enforceable, and at least as stringent as they otherwise would be.

The Agreement does provide alternative and/or streamlined procedures for certain administrative requirements for monitoring, reporting, and permitting. DNR negotiated terms, however, to ensure that these procedures still include adequate levels of regulatory oversight. The result is that these alternative procedures will save Wisconsin Electric and DNR both time and money, without jeopardizing environmental quality. They will also reduce the administrative burden of permitting and encourage Wisconsin Electric to make process efficiency improvements.

Involving the Community and Building Trust

Under the terms of this Agreement, Wisconsin Electric will perform periodic audits and performance evaluations. The company will meet regularly with interested persons from the community surrounding the plant, and those stakeholders will be involved in meaningful ways in reviewing environmental performance and discussing issues. The company will report periodically to the DNR and the interested persons group on the implementation of the Agreement and on the company's environmental performance. **The public will now have access to more information about this source than ever before.**

This Agreement will lead to increased trust among Wisconsin Electric, the public, and DNR. It will reduce the amount of time spent by Wisconsin Electric and DNR on administrative tasks that have no direct environmental benefit, and it will serve as a useful model that may help other companies improve their environmental performance.